

July 14, 1952

MINISTERIAL TALKS IN LONDON, JUNE 1952Summary Minutes^{1/}3:00 - 4:30 P.M., Thursday, June 26, 1952
British Foreign OfficeEXTRACT

Mr. EDEN opened the conversation on Indo-China by stating that it might be well, during the bilateral discussions, to go over together what could be said to Mr. Schuman in the trilateral discussions. He anticipated that Mr. Schuman might take the by now familiar line that there was little prospect for victory in Indo-China and that, unless a general settlement were reached, the best we could hope for would be a stalemate. This did not accord to the understanding of the British Government, which has the impression that the situation is improving somewhat; certainly there is a better government, there is wider representation in the government, and active Vietnamese participation. Mr. EDEN said that he planned to discuss the situation with Mr. Schuman along such lines in the hope of stimulating his morale and divorcing him from his relatively defeatist attitude. THE SECRETARY replied that he had been discussing Indo-China with the French along the lines he and Mr. Eden had taken in the tripartite discussions in Paris. He expressed the opinion that the only avenue to success in Indo-China is the rapid build-up of native armed forces and the assumption by the people of Vietnam of an

increasing

^{1/} Copy held in S/S-R. The June 26 discussions are also described in tel. SECTO 19, June 27, 1952, from London.

increasing share of the financial and military burden, THE SECRETARY announced that the French had been informed that the United States was prepared to increase its military assistance program for Indo-China by \$150 million. He added that the United States, feeling that the French military training program was badly strained, had offered to assist them in this respect, but that the French, always skittish over what they might regard as undue American interference, had not taken up this offer. Certainly it is not up to the Americans to press on the French assistance along these lines. THE SECRETARY said that it was obvious that Mr. Letourneau was much encouraged as a result of his visit to Washington. He asked Dr. Jessup to read the text of the Department's telegram 2014, June 18, to Saigon, summarizing the discussions with Mr. Letourneau.

THE SECRETARY said that he had warned the French that success in the military field in Indo-China carried with it certain dangers, including the increased possibility of a large-scale Chinese Communist military intervention. He said that this in turn points up the question, "How can we prevent this from happening?" He felt it would be desirable to issue a warning statement of some sort, whether public, private, detailed and specific, or otherwise, but it would be essential to have a general understanding as to the action which we might take if the warning were to go unheeded. To issue a warning and take no effective action would be calamitous. Perhaps the United States and the United Kingdom, preferably in conjunction with France, Australia, and New Zealand, can reach a tentative agreement on political policy in this regard which would form a framework for joint military planning. This, in turn, leads to the major question: "What form could retaliation against aggression take?" The American military authorities are of the strong opinion that action only against the approaches to Indo-China would be ineffective. In fact, the first problem which we would likely have to face would be the evacuation of French military and civilians from Tongking. Action confined to the air and naval arms directed against the Chinese Communists in Indo-China would likewise be ineffective and, in the light of world commitments, the United States has no infantry available for operations

within

within Indo-China. The United States thinking is along the lines of a blockade of the coast of China, combined with air action, designed to upset the economy of mainland China and to lessen the will of the Chinese Communists to continue their aggression. Such action would cease when aggression ceased, and this would be made clear to everyone. Every effort should be made to avoid action in the areas of acute sensitivity to the Soviet Union. We are of the opinion that the Soviet Union would probably not enter the conflict if it understood clearly that we had no intention of attempting to overthrow the Chinese Communist regime by force. We must bear in mind that the Chinese Communists have a formidable air force, and we may be forced to attack it wherever it is found. If the Chinese Communists do invade Indo-China in substantial force, it will be a threat to the vital interests of all of us.

Mr. EDEN said that he saw no serious objection to the issuance of a warning; he recalled that he had already issued a public warning in his speech at Columbia University. He felt that, whether or not a warning is issued, it would be important to have the Chinese Communists know that retaliation against further Chinese aggression is being urgently considered.

THE SECRETARY reiterated that there was an urgent need for basic political guidance on the basis of which military talks could proceed. Mr. EDEN said that he would wish to consult the Cabinet on basic policy, noting that a naval blockade involving Hong Kong was a serious question.

There was general agreement that the Secretary and Mr. Eden would conduct their discussions with Mr. Schuman along the above lines.